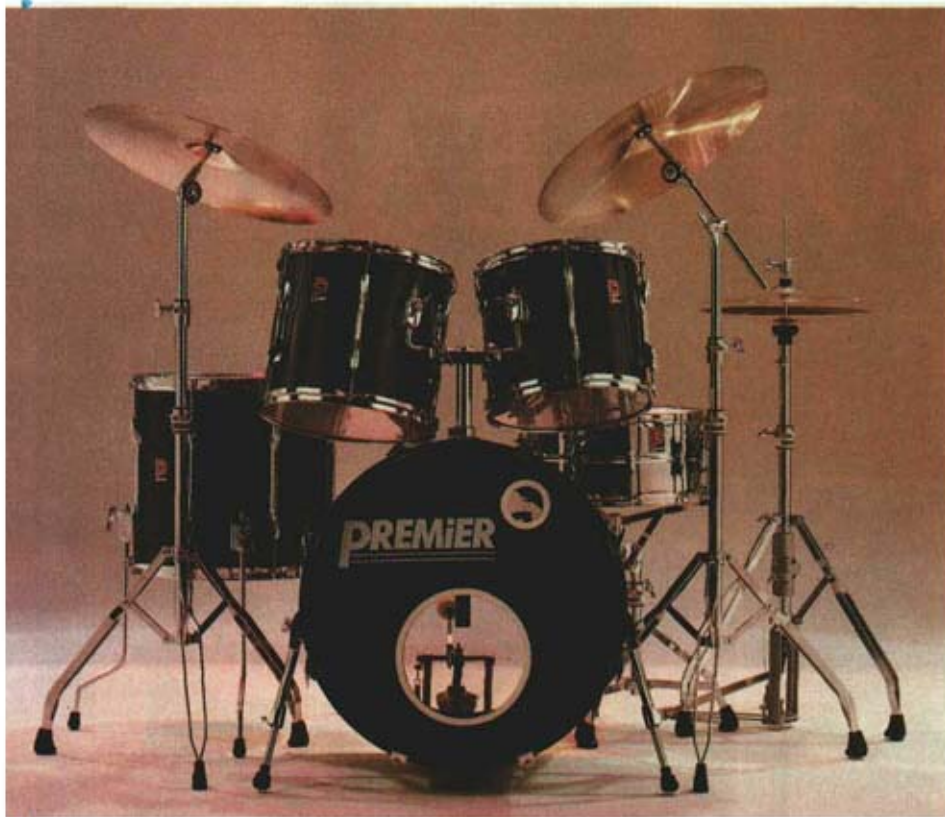


Premier XPK Drumkit



Premier has given a brother to their *APK* drumkit line. While the *APK* kits are finished in plastic covering, the *XPK* kits offer three different lacquered birch veneer finishes, along with a few other differences. The *XPK* has mahogany shells finished in black on the inside, plus high-tension double-ended lugs, which are the same lugs as those used on Premier's *Resonator* series. Components of the five-piece *XPK* kit are: a 16 x 22 bass drum, 11 x 12 and 12 x 13 rack toms, a 16 x 16 floor tom, and a 6 1/2 x 14 steel-shell snare drum.

Bass Drum

The 16 x 22 *XPK* bass drum has eight double-ended "stretch" lugs with T-handle tuners, except for at the bottom of the drum, where key rods are used instead. Beech hoops, painted black, are fitted onto both sides, and there is a small piece of rubber adhered to the batter hoop for pedal mounting. The hoops alone are 3/8" thick. With the rubber pad, some makes of pedals will not clamp onto the hoop (DW is one), making it necessary to remove the rubber altogether. The drum has external fold-away spurs, each of which has a telescopic inner leg, released with a drumkey set screw. The leg has a spike-point tip with a rubber cone surrounding it. Each spur can be set at any desired forward angle by simply releasing the T-bolt and moving the entire spur leg against its mount plate. I didn't

have any problem with the drum creeping forward; the spurs kept the bass drum quite secure and stable.

The drum came fitted with a Premier *DS* batter head, and a black *Megasonic* audience-side head. Premier's *DS* drumheads are transparent two-ply plastic, with a dampening ring in between the two plys. The *Megasonic* is one-ply and has two pre-cut holes (2 1/2" and 8 1/2") for quick air release, as well as for miking purposes. Each hole has a white dampener ring around it.

With this particular combination of heads, the drum really didn't require additional muffling. It had a deep, round, loud tone on its own, mixed with good attack. While a blanket or foam placed inside may further cut down some overtones and "tighten up" the sound, volume would probably be decreased some.

Mounting System

The *XPK* tom holder utilizes a single 19" chromed down post that mates with a larger receiver plate mounted in the center of the bass drum. Atop the tube is a holder system using two independent L-arms with ratchet adjustments. The arms are fully adjustable for angle and spread, but, of course, not for height. Each L-arm has a small movable positioner sleeve, which will brace against the flat side of the drum's mount bracket—basically a variation of the tongue-and-groove memory ring (which the down

tube has). The tom brackets fit and lock onto the L-arms via a T-screw and eyebolt setup; nothing passes through the drum.

Once everything is locked in place, the holder is pretty stable. (I was able to turn the drums a little by hand.) The elongated down post allows for acute drum angles if needed, without the fear of the toms sitting right on the bass drum shell. Many other manufacturers have taken to placing the holder plate near the front of the bass drum. Due to the use of L-arms, Premier's center positioning works fine and actually relieves stress on the bass drum shell. The toms can be conveniently placed, without coming too far past the bass drum's batter hoop. All in all, the holder is uncomplicated, and is easily set up and broken down.

Tom-Toms

The 11x12 tom has five double-ended lugs (odd for a 12" drum); the 12 x 13 has six. Both of them are double-vented, and have no internal muffling. The 16 x 16 floor tom has eight double-ended lugs, as well as three legs that locate into eye-bolt brackets. All the toms came fitted with Premier's *DS* batters and *CL* (transparent single-ply) bottoms. Because of their "extended power" dimensions, the two rack toms had deep tone at normal head tension, with good volume. The floor tom was "throaty," and was capable of being tuned down to timpani levels! All three drums spoke quickly and responsively, especially the 12" and 13" drums, due to their two ventholes. The Premier heads, I've found, give added stick attack sound to the drums. This could be a plus or a minus, depending on the overall sound you want. A Remo *Pinstripe* on the batter side softened up the sound a bit, and rounded it out a little more.

Snare Drum

One difference between the *XPK* and *APK* kits is in the snare drums. While both kits have steel-shell chrome-finished snare drums, the 7036 drum that comes with the *XPK* has a center reinforcing bead for greater tensile strength. This 6 1/2 x 14 snare has ten double-ended lugs, pressed hoops, and a side-throw lever strainer. The throw-off side has the usual fine-tension knob to adjust the 20-strand wire snares (which are held with cord), and the butt-end clamp is serrated to better grip the cording. The bottom hoop is cut away at the snare beds, enabling the snares to drop to their fullest. A coated white Premier *TS* head was fitted to the batter side. A plastic overlay ring was also included to dampen out some of the drum's inherent metallic overtones.

Right out of the box, the drum had a bad snare rattle, and I had to totally re-set up the snares. After that problem was attended to, the drum produced a snappy, alive, high-pitched sound (a la Stewart Copeland). The drum was also very playable at lower

tunings, while still retaining its crispness. Compared to the other drums in the kit, the snare lacked some volume (but not so much as to bury its sound). Rimshots were quite powerful, though. I've always enjoyed Premier's snare sound (sort of orchestral, to me), and this drum is a good example of why.

Hardware

The *XPK* drumkit comes with Premier's 4000 double-braced hardware, rather than the 3000 single-braced stands packaged with the *APK*. The *XPK* kit reviewed includes one straight cymbal stand and one short-boom cymbal stand. Both have wide-stance bases, two adjustable-height tiers, and ratchet-set tilters. The tilters feature a built-in angle memory—a small wire clip that can fit into the gear teeth, stopping the tilter at a pre-designated point when setting up. A great idea!

The boom stand's arm is 10" long, and angles via a ratchet/eye-bolt holder. Both stands are very stable, and have certainly more than ample height—over five feet. In fact, with the boom arm in its straightest position, you have a six-foot stand! Yet both stands will fold away quite compactly.

The snare drum uses a flat hinge tilter, and holds the drum in a basket. A long T-

screw at the bottom of the basket adjusts the arms to firmly clamp the drum. This stand folds from the bottom, making it easy to reduce leg spread—thus making room underneath for any extra pedals you might be using.

Speaking of pedals, the 254 bass drum has a hinged footboard, a single expansion spring, and a flexible fiber strap. Tension is adjusted at the base of the spring holder via a knurled knob. A hexagonal axle holds the beater housing, which is adjustable for position with an allen screw. The pedal clamps to the hoop using the common wing screw/plate method. A felt beater is included. The pedal I tried had a lightweight feel and good response. With Premier's "back-to-basics" design, they've shown that a pedal doesn't have to have a million adjustments to feel good and work well.

Like the rest of the 4000 series, the hi-hat stand also has double-braced legs, and its footplate matches the bass drum pedal. A fat chain linkage is used, and tension is adjustable via a large notched plastic wheel at the front of the stand. A visual gauge indicates your tension setting (heavy to light). On the stand I tested, the wheel moved stiffly, requiring both hands to rotate it. (I've seen other hi-hat models using this system that worked effortlessly). The

height tube has a hose clamp for use as a memory setting, and there are two sprung spurs at the base of the frame. (Come to think of it, the bass pedal doesn't have any.) The stand had a springy feel, and the footboard angle was sloped too much for me. From what I can tell, this cannot be altered. (If you play the hi-hat heel-up, this may not be much of a problem.) Aside from those criticisms, it's silent and smooth.

Cosmetics

Premier's *XPK* kit is available in three different lacquer veneer finishes: rosewood, dark walnut, and black shadow, which was the one I saw. The drums look absolutely gorgeous; the finishing has an extremely professional appearance. Premier's lacquer finishes are truly the best I've seen on any kit in this price range (and may even give some others a run for their money).

Premier's expansion of their *APK* line into the *XPK* series really has me wondering how they can offer such a pro-looking and pro-sounding kit and still manage to keep the price down to what's termed "entry-level." Any beginner or semi-pro who sits at this kit will surely feel he/she's playing a top-of-the line drumset. At \$1,275 retail, the *XPK* is quite a bargain.

Bob Saydowski, Jr.
continued on next page



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